DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 464 272 CG 031 692

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TITLE Counseling in Community: Myth or Reality?
PUB DATE 2002-05-00
NOTE 10p.; In: Building Stronger School Counseling Programs: Bringing Futuristic Approaches into the Present; see CG 031 688.
PUB TYPE Opinion Papers (120)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Agents; *Community; *Counselor Role; *Educational Cooperation; Elementary Secondary Education; Futures (of Society); Models; Organizational Change; *School Counseling; Technology

ABSTRACT

This chapter reviews the myths and stories of counseling over the past several decades and proposes that the twenty-first century story of counseling must be counseling in community. This paradigm change will involve counselors joining with mental health professionals, career development specialists, and educators to write the story of professionals working together in collaboration to transform counseling for the future. The details of this new paradigm are as follows: the community will be a global community in which the emphasis will be on the health and wholeness of all persons in society; the foundations will be spiritual; the methodology will be technological, utilizing the techniques of virtual reality; organizations will change in structure and ideology; and the leadership will be synergistic. (Contains 10 references.) (GCP)

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By

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Chapter Four

Counseling in Community Myth or Reality?

Jackie Allen

Thinking in the Future Tense, as James (1996) so aptly named her book, may not be as easy a task as one might think. A child born in the twenty-first century, the year 2003, will graduate in 2021; how can we imagine what life might be like 20 years from now? Is it really possible to see into a crystal ball, to be futurists? Can we leap from the secure present into the unknown, where nobody has gone before, without having some doubts of our personal capabilities as soothsayers?

Thinking about the future, I am reminded of my experience many years ago as a freshman student at the University of Redlands. Before attending freshman orientation, all new students to the university were sent special instructions and two or three books to read. One of those books was Orwell's *1984*, which I found to be an unimaginable look at the future that as a freshman I was awed to contemplate, let alone explore. I read that book with amazement, wondering what would happen not only in the history of the world, but also in my immediate future in college. I was 17 years old when I read Orwell's book, and most of his predictions by now have come true. It is my turn now to think in the future tense. What an awesome responsibility! With that responsibility comes a challenge—to dare to move forward, to be a changer, to be a reformer, to break new ground, to ask those questions that will lead to a better future. Is there really any choice after all? For in reality, not to move forward is to die.

Death or Life?

During the 1960s, there was a new development in theology called the *death of God* movement. The death-of-God theologians claimed that God was really dead and the world existed in a nihilistic aftermath without purpose, goals, or foundational

beliefs. This movement caused me, a seminary student at the time, to answer for myself an existential question: Did I believe that God was really dead? Was it possible that a group of believers had turned their backs on the possibility of a future with God and were abandoning their former faith and looking elsewhere for a new god in which to believe and follow? Each believer had a choice: to confirm his or her belief in God or to abandon hope, moving into the realm of the unknown. The fact that a decision had to be made and a path chosen caused the believer to pause from the mundane occurrences of daily life and contemplate the future; for to be alive was to have faith in tomorrow, to move forward, to anticipate what tomorrow might bring, and to envision a future that had meaning in which to place one's faith.

Some have said that counseling has no future, that it is meaningless, that its effectiveness cannot be proven. Others argue that it is not a science and are equally skeptical about its being an art form. If there is no future, surely counseling will die on the pyre of unbelief and skepticism, ridicule and doubt, never again to rise from the ashes of a bleak grave. To abandon faith in counseling is to lack direction in our profession and to wander in disbelief looking everywhere for a new discipline in which to put our faith. To abandon the possibility of a future, although it may look different than the present, is to sign the death warrant of counseling.

The Myths of Counseling

The storyteller takes tales from the past and retells them, making them relevant to the future. To gain a proper perspective on the profession of counseling, it is necessary to look first to the past and then retell the stories, applying their lessons to the future. Joseph Campbell (1991) has written about the power of myths in our daily lives and how humans create their own myths. What are the myths we have grown up with in the twentieth century? What stories do we tell about counseling and guidance for the twenty-first century? Because counseling and guidance is a relatively new field compared with history and philosophy, fewer myths have been created. Having begun my personal counseling career in the early 1970s, and having worked in the counseling field through the 1980s and 1990s, I would like to propose a myth for each decade to help us understand our past.

The myth of the 1970s must be described as the *hero myth.* Carl Rogers' unconditional positive regard was the counseling theory of the decade. Counseling was often explained as the

outgrowth of an older discipline, psychology; counselors put into practice psychological theories as they worked with their counselees. The practice of working with clients was considered an art form. Counseling became the knight in shining armor. In private practice, in churches, in schools, and in industry, counseling theories and practice flourished. Counselors were out to save the world. The world quickly became overwhelming, and the 1970s might be seen as the last positive decade for counseling.

Then came the 1980s, a more skeptical time in which counseling was no longer a knight in shining armor, rescuing those with problems and troubles, but a battle-worn warrior, soon to be replaced by the next savior. Starting in California, and soon spreading to many other parts of the United States, counseling quickly fell prey to the *victim myth* in the face of public voter referendums such as Proposition 13, from which education lost and property owners gained. And when the schools lost funding, counseling resources were cut and morale plummeted. The stories told were of reduced services, counselors being reassigned to classrooms, and, in some cases, entire programs being cut. Loss and despair were common tales and the storytellers began to ask audiences if counseling would survive. Was this the death knell of counseling? Was this young profession, not yet an adolescent, gone too soon to really establish itself in the world, make its contribution, and know what life was really about?

But alas, as the storytellers began to tell their stories of counseling and guidance in the 1990s, the victim myth changed to the *stepchild myth:* a Cinderella story of sorts, in which the stepchild did not have the full rights and privileges of other members in the family. Counselors were asked to work very hard, like Cinderella, as the other professionals went to the ball and got the funding prize. Managed care and budget cuts in schools reduced salaries and opportunities for counselors to offer their programs and services. Many counselors retired and were not replaced as their remaining colleagues were asked to do more and more. Counselors in private practice competed with school counselors, and counselors in general competed with other mental health professionals and educators for jobs that would pay a decent salary. New specialties were born and many counselors of the 1960s and 1970s found themselves retraining in career, gerentological, and multicultural counseling to compete in a niche market for the remaining jobs.

A Paradigm Change

In the last three decades, the counseling stories that were told were not exactly supportive of a flourishing profession. Are these myths a proper legacy for the twenty-first century? If counseling is to survive in the twenty-first century, the new myth must not be naive, nor must it be negative. The twenty-first-century story of counseling can be none other than *counseling in community*. Together the counselors across the United States can join with mental health professionals, career development specialists, and educators to write the story of the twenty-first century—the story of working together, not in competition but in collaboration, to transform counseling for the future. Creation of a myth for the future, a legacy for the twenty-first century, a program plan for the graduate in 2021, will require a new paradigm for counseling.

Joel Barker (1992) explained in *The Future Edge* the characteristics of a paradigm. Paradigms are common and must be functional; they provide the rules for the direction and development of the organization. When the paradigm changes, the paradigm, in effect, reverses the common-sense relationship between seeing and believing and builds a new perception of how things are or might be. When old paradigms are adhered to very strongly, lacking flexibility, paradigm paralysis, a terminal disease of certainty, may result. The best paradigm characteristic, according to Barker, is that human beings can choose to change their paradigms. Will counselors be able to change their paradigm and envision a new future?

Looking back on the world of the twentieth century and into the future of the twenty-first century, what paradigm of counseling will be possible, probable, and visionary? The best strategy for a counseling paradigm is paradigm pliancy—divergent thinking, brainstorm planning, and creative envisioning. In order to construct a functional paradigm for the year 2021, some basic premises must be established. First, the paradigm must take into account the economics of the century; economic power in the educational, political, and social structures must be acknowledged. The global nature of economics must also be understood (Flowers, 1996). The human rights of all peoples in microsociety in a specific country and in the larger macrosociety of the world must be considered. The diversity of various cultures, races, and nationalities must not be ignored. The interconnection of systems will be an essential

element. Technology will grow and flourish and will continue to provide new means of communication. The paradigm must be amenable to change, use the best techniques and methodologies to facilitate that change, be flexible enough to take the energy of the age and flow with that energy, and employ the very best leaders to light the way.

Counseling in Community

Counseling in community will be the myth and the paradigm for the twenty-first century. The community will be a global community in which the emphasis will be on the health and wholeness of all persons in society; the foundations will be spiritual; the methodology will be technological, utilizing the techniques of virtual reality; organizations will change in structure and ideology; and the leadership will be synergistic.

Global Community

Diversity and multiculturalism will begin to fuse into a true understanding of inclusiveness—the underprivileged will no longer be on the fringe. Integration of mind and body will promote wholeness and wellness. A philosophy of oneness and collaboration in community will supersede individualism. Cultures, races, and nationalities will discuss common problems of personhood, somewhat oblivious to ethnocentric experiences, with the true desire of tackling the indigenous problems of all nations and nationalities.

Spiritual Foundations

Spirituality will become the foundation of counseling. Inner stability, strength, and connectedness with the source of one's being and the free-flowing energy of the universe will be emphasized in theory. Spirituality will be integrated into counseling through such techniques as the experiential focusing method employed by Elfie Hinterkopf (1998). Self-knowledge, self-sufficiency, and spirituality will be the goals of therapeutic interventions. Spirituality will infuse the experience of the home, the workplace, and the nature of oneness in the world.

Counseling Methodology

Counseling will be done in cyberspace; virtual reality counseling will be a popular methodology. Counselor access and client understanding will improve through the use of new

technological methods. Virtual laboratories of all cultures, philosophies, and theories will be at the learner's fingertips. Simulations with indices of possible solutions will stimulate minds to reach inward to personal strength and creativity to solve exterior problems. Person and machine will struggle together to bring meaning to existence, dignity to personhood, and unity within and between global communities. Technology may become a viable force for social action (Casey, 1998). Research not only will adequately support practice, but also will initiate new methods of practice. Technological developments will enhance the knowledge base for counseling research and speed up the process through the use of counseling in cyberspace. Prevention and intervention will fuse into a third "vention," "self-vention," by which the individual, through spirituality and self-realization, will enhance self-knowledge, self-sufficiency, and self-actualization. Barriers among and within groups will begin to diminish as the sense of community grows.

Organizational Structure

Unity of national and state organizations may no longer be an issue, as international entities will grow in popularity and effectiveness. Operations will no longer be defined by the wall of a building or the geographical location on a map; only the capabilities of technology and communication will limit outreach and growth. Specialties may diminish and the concept of general practitioner return as the counselor uses a large technological support system to assist in the counseling process. Turf issues may decrease as the world of counseling professionals seeks to effectively collaborate on working with the patient's health and wholeness in body, mind, and spirit. The issue of accreditation standards and accrediting bodies will continue, but the client will be more interested in the counselor's history of effective interventions, which by then may be readily available on the Internet. Training programs will continue to use distance teaching and learning methods to reach prospective counselors in their homes, regardless of country. As technology breaks down the physical walls, unity of philosophy and oneness of purpose will break down the walls of dissension and prejudice.

Leadership

Strong synergistic leadership will develop to guide the counselors of the twenty-first century. The vision to change the profession must come from within the profession, and within

the individual counselor, and develop into a collective synchronicity of purpose and commitment to community (Jaworski, 1998). These new leaders will lead from inner strength, a sense of mission, and an understanding of the collective evolution of community. The evolution of a new paradigm, the development of the concept of community, will emanate from the heart of counseling to encompass those who may not be of like mind and will reach beyond to unify all in global cyberspace.

Conclusion

The concept of community will encompass counseling in the new millennium. Counseling will increase in popularity and growth around the world as small nations and third world countries continue to work with large nations and world leaders in developing a global theory of counseling. Counseling will be alive in the twenty-first century, but its metamorphosis may challenge the comfort level and stretch the imagination of the twentieth-century counselor. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in an undelivered address prepared for Jefferson Day, April 13, 1945, said: "The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today. Let us move forward with strong and active faith."

These thoughts and musings about the future are both a glimpse and a hope that as counseling evolves in the twenty-first century, it will be a force for unity and a paradigm of community. By the time the neophytes of the twenty-first century graduate in the year 2021, some of these changes may have taken place, whereas others may take many more years. Nevertheless, we can move the profession and the practice forward by making the myth of the twenty-first century—counseling in community—become a reality.

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